

A photograph of two Air Force recruiters, a woman and a man, in blue uniforms, walking on a city street. The woman is holding a clipboard and pointing towards a white car. The man is holding a rolled-up document. In the background, there are other people, including a man in a military-style cap, and a white car with a blue stripe. The title "Selling Blue in the BIG APPLE" is overlaid in large blue letters on the right side of the image.

# Selling Blue in the BIG APPLE

story and photos by Master Sgt. Scott Wagers

**G**rowing up in Brooklyn, N.Y., Diane Precil never gave much thought about crossing into the blue until her older brother Hanley, an Air Force recruiter, came home and tried to sign her up.

"We all thought he was trying to recruit the entire family," said now Senior Airman Precil. "Nobody took him seriously."

But after a sincere hour-long chat with her brother, she not only wanted to join the Air Force, she wanted her brother's job. Now, less than three years later, she's wearing the badge and beating the streets in nearby Queens, and has nearly doubled her annual recruiting goal in one of the nation's toughest markets.

"You have to become good at making quick on-the-spot evaluations of people you meet," said the friendly, outspoken Airmen of the nearly 2.3 million locals – of which 46 percent are foreign-born natives of more than 100 nations. This makes Queens the most ethnically and culturally diverse city in the world.

Besides a knack for judging character, Airman Precil also has youth and her experience as a native New Yorker on her side.

"I can identify with young people here because I've been in their shoes," she said. "If you're not from here, people can come across as very aggressive and rude – and you can't let that bother you."

In fact, very little seems to bother Airman Precil who attributes her recruiting success to her ability to network and just "believing in the program."

"The Air Force sells itself. If I can open other people's eyes to the same opportunities I've had then I'm happy."

**On a "zone blitz,"** Air Force recruiters Senior Airman Diane Precil and Tech. Sgt. Soren Pease canvas the Jamaican-Queens neighborhood, crossing paths with a New York City police officer who previously expressed an interest in joining the Air Force.





**Outside her office in downtown Jamaica-Queens** (left), Airman Precil takes the contact info of a potential recruit. The office, located above McDonald's on Jamaica Avenue, has been a recruiting fixture for over 30 years. She catches Udechue Kingsley, son of a Nigerian diplomat, and native New Yorker Phil Mitchell (above) at the Jamaica-Center train station to talk about their post-college plans. A "take one" box filled (bottom left) with brochures and business cards competes for attention with the hottest selling tennis shoe and a flyer for a local comedy club in Moe's Sneaker Spot at the Jamaica Colosseum Mall.





**On career day at Bayside High School,** Airman Precil (top left) gives her sixth hour-long career talk to a group of seniors. When 18-year-old Miles Cooper (right, seated left) said he was hesitant to enlist in the Air Force because his mother wouldn't approve, Airman Precil asked him if "mama" picked out the clothes he was wearing. Once a month (above), Airman Precil and her office partner, Tech. Sgt. Soren Pease, meet with new recruits in the Delayed Enlistment Program to introduce Air Force culture such as fitness, customs and courtesies and drill and ceremony protocol.



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